CROSSGEN
ISSUE NUMBER 1
MYSTIC
Magic *can* happen...but only for one of them.
G. WILLOW WILSON • DAVID LÓPEZ
ÁLVARO LÓPEZ • NATHAN FAIRBAIRN
RATED T+
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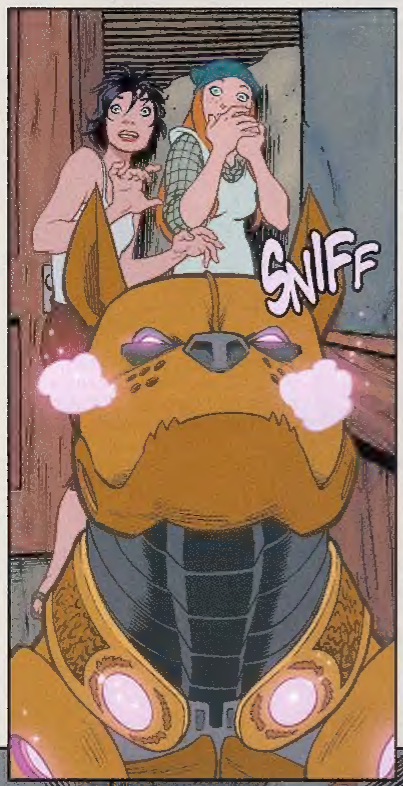
MARVEL

"Oh, *Hyperion!*
"City of aetheric *delights*, queen of the Lilaine River, home of philosopher kings and mystic *learning*...
"What bliss is there superior to looking upon her, and studying the high and mysterious sciences that have made her the envy of all Verne..."

...Homunculi, and horseless trolleys, and--
I'll tell you what bliss is superior, Miss High and Mighty. Not having to scrub ten hampers of dirty laundry every day.
I'd sell the whole city of Hyperion to be free of Mistress Alenora and this shuddering pile of an orphanage.
Don't be so unromantic, Giselle. We may be in debt to Mistress Alenora, but our minds are still free.
A free mind doesn't make a free body. Mine aches, and I've got burns in a dozen places from boiling laundry pots.
If you did as I do and studied the Noble Arts with serious intention, you would forget your aches and burns.
Look here, for example...
"Aether, the ineffable matter of the cosmos, is the key to all our alchemical knowledge and mystical technology.
"Collected just twice a decade, when Verne's two moons eclipse the sun together and create a state of maximum darkness, aether is our most precious resource."

It might sound crazy, but I really believe I can do this--one day I will be an apprentice--
It does sound crazy, Genevieve. You know as well as I do that they only ever pick nobles to apprentice at the palace.
That's why they call them the Noble Arts. The fact that we can understand them just goes to show you what a total scam the whole thing is.
Now come on--the laundry is waiting, and we've got to get past those blasted dogs without getting caught.
But this is my escape, Giselle--this is how I leave the walls of this awful place behind.
What care I for a couple of mechanical brutes when there is such knowledge to be had?
You'll care very much when one of those mechanical brutes takes a chunk out of your non-mechanical rear.



THE TENTH APPRENTICE

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Lord love a duck! Where have *you* been?
Nowhere special...just Mistress Alenora's *private library.*
Again? She'll kill you if she finds out!
Get back to work, *quick,* before she makes her morning rounds!
UGH!
What do they feed those foundling babies?
Same thing *we* got fed when we were foundling babies. Same thing they feed us now.
Turnip surprise.
Aagh!
What is it?
I burned my wrist on this stupid pot!

Idiot girls! What is this racket? Why aren't you *working?*
We *were* working. Genevieve burnt herself on the laundry pot.
We've been complaining for *years* about these blasted things-- we need better *work clothes,* or *smaller pots.*

And I've offered you *both*--if I can add the expense to your *debt.* Raising thankless orphan girls is *expensive.*
After the way you've treated us over the years, *you* should be paying *us* just to put up with you.

SMACK

If you don't learn a little modesty and obedience, Giselle, you will end up a pathetic fallen woman--
Like your mother, that prostitute who left you on my doorstep wrapped in rags.
I want to hear the squeak of clean laundry next time I pass!
stupid old harpy.
I hope those dogs eat her in her sleep.
I've got to get out of this filthy place.
Don't be that way. At least you're not assigned to latrines like poor Henny.
Or to chimney sweeping like Benette. She coughs up tar at night.
I'm sorry I got you into trouble.
It's not your fault, Viv. It's not your fault.
I just wish I could see the world the way you see it--as a place where dreams and hopes mean something.
But all I see is tomorrow, and it looks exactly like today.

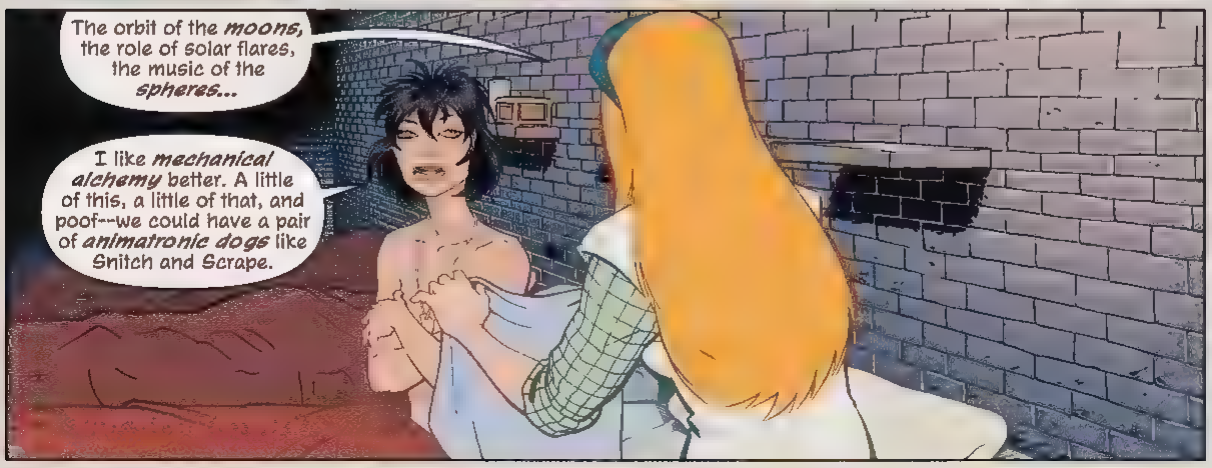
Limpet Hall
31
Limpet Hall
Orphanage for Girls
Alenora Limpet Proprietress
"We feed hungry children"
TO THE DOGS
It was really brave of you, talking back to Mistress Alenawful like that. I never could.
That's because you're a dear, and I'm a devil.
No, you're not. You just have a way of speaking your mind.
Not exactly a valuable trait in a crack aether mechanic with only one pair of pants.
Pish. It's a valuable trait in anybody.

You know--the *Choosing Ceremony* for the next class of royal apprentices will be held at the palace in a couple of days.
You're still thinking about all that? Put your *head* back on, oh Genevieve the Laundress of Limpet Hall. I hate always having to be the *practical* one.
It doesn't *cost* anything just to *hope.*
Oh? I'm sure the Mistress could find a way to add it to your *debt.*
There are some things even *she* can't count up on her abacus.
You've got to be *careful,* Viv--hope too much and you'll end up like those crazy *revolutionaries* who're always shrieking at the palace gates.
I'm *fine.* I'm going to have a pleasant dream about living at the palace, sleeping on a feather bed, and apprenticing under the *High Artisan.*
And I'll wake up the *better* for it.
I'm sure you will, Viv.
I'm sure you will.

Giselle! Giselle! Get dressed--we've only got an hour to use the library before everyone else wakes up.
Mmph?

All right, all right. Hand me my clothes.

Today we can read about *celestial mathematics!*
You don't even *like* math. *I'm* the one who's always calculating our pocket money.

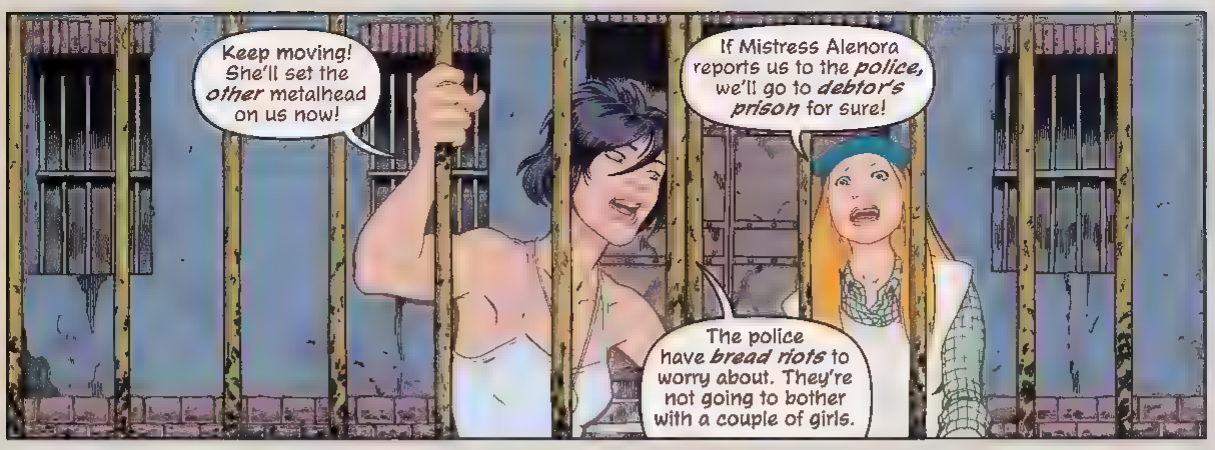

The orbit of the *moons*, the role of solar flares, the music of the *spheres...*
I like *mechanical alchemy* better. A little of this, a little of that, and poof--we could have a pair of *animatronic dogs* like Snitch and Scrape.

Do you see anything?
Not a soul. Only *you* get up at this hour *voluntarily.*
You'd be a lot faster in *pants* instead of petticoats!
And you'd look more like a *girl* if you *dressed* like one once in a while!
Hooray!
Another successful *invasion!* We're--
Genevieve. .

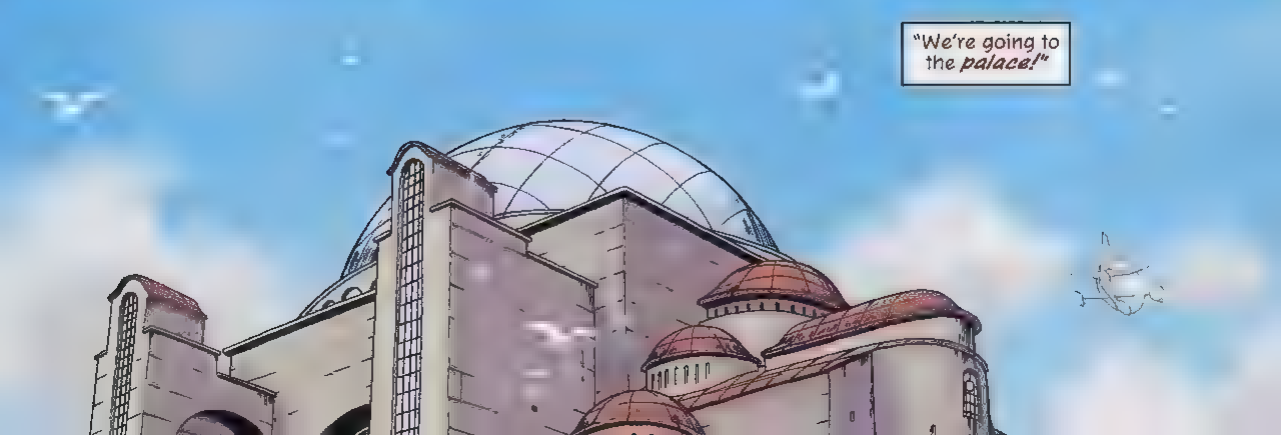
...RUN!
Giselle!
SMASH

Woof to you, you bucket of bolts.
What in the name of--
No! My widdle widdle baby!
You miserable litt e street urchins .

Think you can *make something* of yourselves reading books? You're ignorant peasants!
You'll pay for this with your sweat! I'll see to it that you work *every day* for the rest of your wretched *lives!*
Like *hell* we will, you bilious old *hag.*
Come on!
But--
Come back here, you ungrateful little snots! You are *mine* until you repay me for putting *food* in your mouths all these years!
I said *come back!*


Keep moving! She'll set the *other* metalhead on us now!
If Mistress Alenora reports us to the *police*, we'll go to *debtor's prison* for sure!
The police have *bread riots* to worry about. They're not going to bother with a couple of girls.

But where will we go?
I've got a friend who's a *maid* in the royal palace. Maybe she can fix us up with a place to sleep, if not a pair of *jobs*.
That'll be nice, won't it? You wanted to go to the palace...
Oh, *Giselle!*
31
Booth
5


"We're going to the *palace!*"

Well, I can give you a spot on the floor to sleep for tonight...
But to tell you the truth, two runaways are the last thing I want to be dealin' with today. With the Choosing Ceremony an' all, we're--
Ohpleasecanwewatch? Just for a little while. I've always wanted to see the High Artisan...
Watch? What ye want to be watchin' a bunch of high-born hedge wizards philosophizin' for?
She wants to be one of them. Hope it's not a bother--we'll just watch from the back of the room.
Well, I suppose it won't harm nothin'. I'll give ye a pair of maids' uniforms--just don't go grubbin' up the nice wallpaper with your dirty fingers.
My lords and ladies--as High Artisan I welcome you to one of Hyperion's greatest traditions!
The choosing of ten new apprentices, worthy young men and women who will study the mystic sciences known as the Noble Arts, under my tutelage.

One of these young people will be *special.* He or she will exhibit an intuitive relationship with the Arts, like a *true mystic.*
This young person will be named *High Apprentice,* and succeed me when I am gone.
I commend you all for putting yourselves forward for *consideration.*
By appearing here today, you have demonstrated your willingness to *learn,* work hard, and serve your *kingdom.*
And serve *yourselves,* and line your *pockets.* Let's not forget that
Husn!
Now...
If you are all *ready,* we shall begin.

Who first proposed the theory of *syncretic spherical resonance?*
Uhh... Seer Lucien of Gildenstern?
Wrong. Next.
What is the celestial relationship between Verne's two moons?
Semi... semi-syncopated.
Very good.
The average lifespan of an alchemical-mechanical *homunculus?*
?
The effect of aether on metallurgical constructs?
Animative.
Indeed.
Describe the action of a *tertiary aether mirror.*
Umm... reflective in both luminous and umbral states?
Quite so.
What is the maximum radius of a celestine conical pendulum?
Forty-two.
Next.
Name the woman who first proposed *primal disc theory.*
Marguerite of Bondive.
Excellent.
What is the relationship of matter to aether?
They're, *umm...* different?
...hmm.
Name the inventor of the *lightbending eyeglass.*
Lord Rikard Flanders.
Very good.

Now, one final question...
If the orbit of the moon Chyron was sped up by two days, and the orbit of the moon Neron slowed by three, when would the next *full eclipse* occur?
Sixteen years, thirty-one days!
Five years, forty-seven days!
Twenty-two years, three hundred and eight days?
Wrong, wrong and *wrong.*

I should know this, I should know this--
But I can't make the numbers work out! My calculations must be wrong.
Sped up by two, slowed by three...
It's not your calculations that're wrong, Viv. It's the question itself.
Stop your grumping and let me figure this out. If I can impress Master Alexander, there's a chance--
It's a trick. Another nasty aristocratic trick, to go along with this galloping waste of money and time.
Don't be silly, of course there's an answer. You're always so impatient--if you would only be a little more disciplined--
It's a trick question!

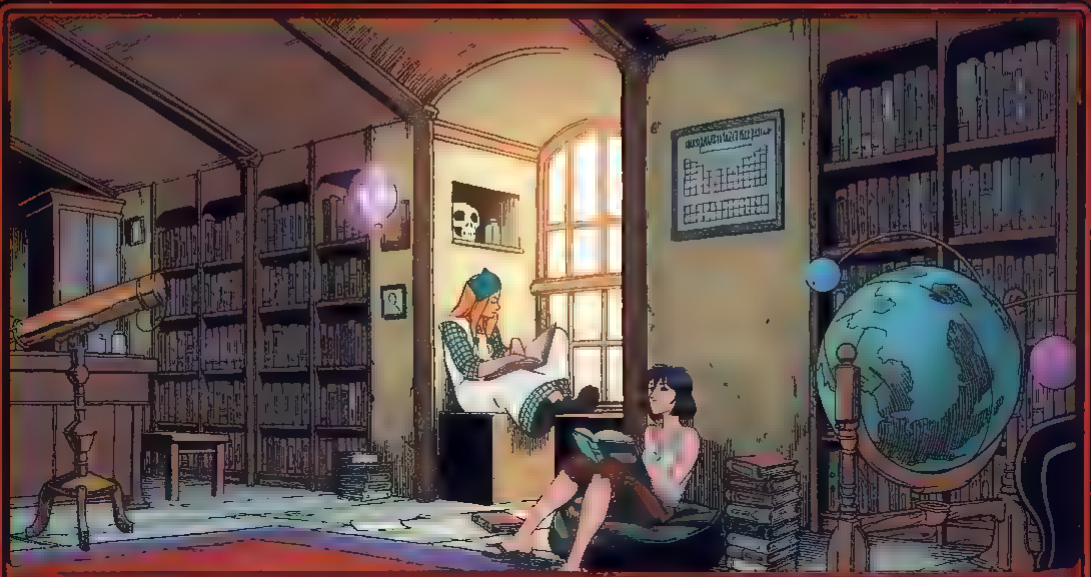
If the orbit of one moon were slowed by two days and the orbit of the other sped up by three, there would *never again* be a full eclipse.
Come here, young lady.
What is your *name,* child?
Giselle, sir.
And how does a *scullery maid* come to study the Noble Arts?
I--I'm not a maid. I just, um, *borrowed* this uniform. I filched my mistress's books to study them. And it was all my idea and I'm here *alone*--nobody helped. So *punish* me.
Eyes the color of aether...the *great prediction!*
And a *commoner* to boot! This will upend the world ..
My dear, you are exactly *correct.*

I have found my tenth apprentice!
!!
Impossible! Outrageous!
An orphaned peasant?
BOO!
BOO! BOOo!
BOo!
BOO! BOOo! BOO!
BOOo! BOo! BOO! BOo!
TO BE CONTINUED

CROSSGEN

TWO TEENAGED WIZARDS. ONE DESTINY.

Can their friendship survive its greatest test?



[illegible] Limpet Hall Orphanage for Girls in the [illegible] of Hyperion is [illegible] for two young girls to grow up. But [illegible] have always [illegible] waiting for the day they will be [illegible] the [illegible] secrets [illegible] to study the [illegible] available. [illegible] they're caught after [illegible] of Limpet Hall, they have no choice but to take to the streets and forge their own paths.

MARVEL

CROSSGEN
ISSUE NUMBER 2
MYSTIC
Magic *can* happen...but only for one of them.
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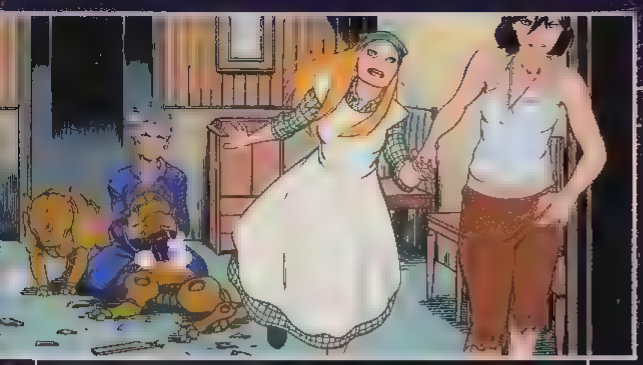

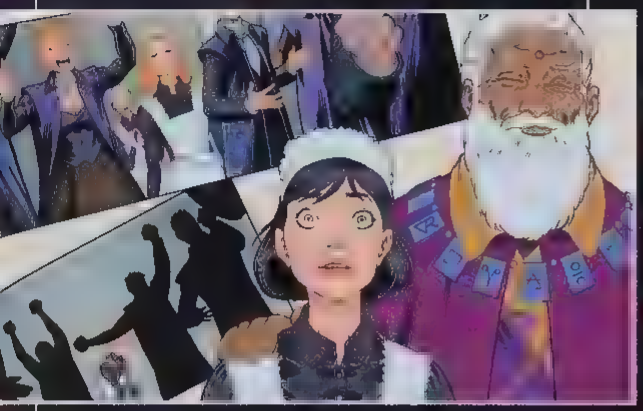

Aether is the magical element that makes all of Hyperion run, from the High Palace to the impoverished slums where **Giselle** and **Genevieve** live at The Limpet Hall Orphanage for Girls. They work off their debt by day and by night teach themselves the Noble Arts, magic wielded only by the aristocracy. Viv is convinced if she can just get to the palace, she would be able to snag one of the coveted roles of Apprentice to the High Artisan. Their lives are predictable...until the day they're caught at their secret study and have to take to the streets to escape debtor's prison.

Seeking refuge in the palace and hidden among the working class as maids, the romantic Viv begs Giselle to attend the Apprentice Choosing Ceremony, certain it is fate that has brought them there. But when it comes time to answer **Master Alexander's** final question, headstrong Giselle shouts him down as a fraud for using the Arts as a way of keeping the social classes in place. Alexander sees in Giselle not only a streak of inherent magical ability, but the echo of a prophecy from long ago, and names her as his final Apprentice. Viv is crushed, and the two friends suddenly find themselves on opposite sides of the class divide...

MYSTIC

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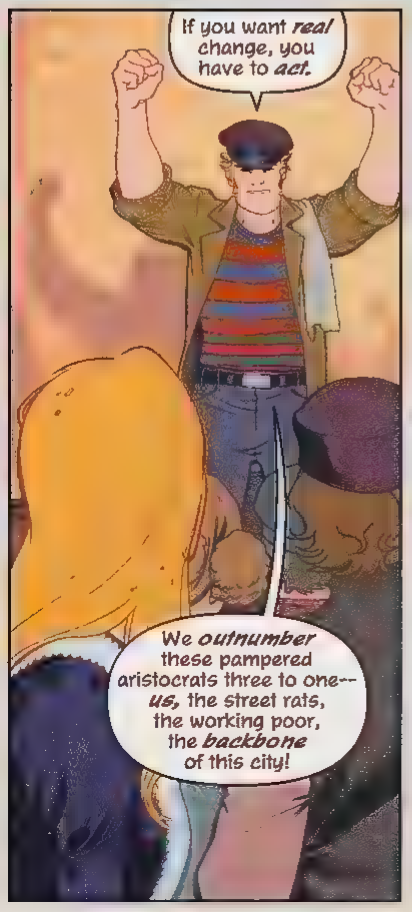
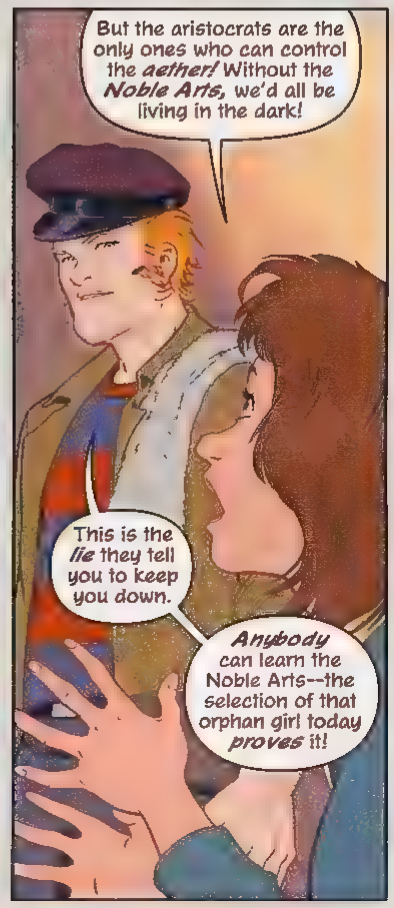
Out you go!
And stop making such a scene!
Let go of me!
XII
I haven't done anythi--!
UGH!

Cheers to the cheeky *street girl* what gave them royals better than they got!
Imagine, one of *us*, a royal apprentice!
A *laundress* what taught herself the *Noble Arts!* Wonder who put such a wild idea in her head?
This is surely the beginning of a *new age!* Them upper class twits is sure to listen to us now!
Too right! Didja hear Phillipe's got quite a crowd over in the square?
What's the little chit's *name,* anyhow? Germaine? Georgette?
What's your hurry, love? Don't you want to stay and celebrate?
No.
And the chit's name is *Giselle.*

Fellow citizens of Hyperion!
Why are you celebrating *crumbs* from your masters' table like a pack of obedient *dogs?*
You think *one* royal apprentice is going to change anything?
Look around you! We live in *filth* while they dine on gold!


If you want *real* change, you have to *act.*
We *outnumber* these pampered aristocrats three to one--*us,* the street rats, the working poor, the *backbone* of this city!

If we had the *courage,* we could change the course of *history*... not just for Hyperion, but for all of Verne itself.


But the aristocrats are the only ones who can control the *aether!* Without the *Noble Arts,* we'd all be living in the dark!
This is the *lie* they tell you to keep you down.
Anybody can learn the Noble Arts--the selection of that orphan girl today *proves* it!

It's *true!* I taught *myself* the Noble Arts by studying in secret!
Come up here with me, sister citizen.
Tell these good people--what have the elite ever done for you?
FIDDLER
Nothing.
No--*worse* than nothing. They stole my *childhood* and my *dreams.*
I've been *waiting* for someone like you to come along, sister--
The revolution could use someone with your *skills.* Stick with me, and I promise the people who've hurt you will *pay.*

"Follow me, please, lord and lady apprentices."
Your new quarters are at the end of the grand gallery, just a stone's throw from the ballroom.
You idiots could feed an *army* of orphans with just *one* of the gold knick-knacks you've got stashed in this place.
Homesick already, Giselle? I'm sure we could find some *laundry* for you to boil.
I can boil more than laundry, you silk-diapered little--
Felice, be *nice*. All that spite will ruin your complexion.
My lords' rooms are through the left door, my ladies' through the right.
You will be summoned to dine with the court at seven sharp.
Ignore those three. They come from some of the richest families in Verne, but they've less heart than your average *weasel*.

Ladies, welcome to your new home
Knock me over! Look at this pile!
Careful-- people might think you've never been inside a giant jewel-encrusted palace before.
I'll take the south-facing room. Jolie and Heloise will take the rooms on either side, naturally.
You have the *best* taste, Felice--always choosing the most lovely and advantageous--
Heloise, if I wanted something to bury its nose in my bottom, I'd get a *dog*.
I only meant--
You never learn, Heloise--better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you're an idiot than open your mouth and *prove* it.

Holy cow...
What's wrong?
Nothing--it's the *nicest* room I've ever seen.
And it should have been *Genevieve's.* I shouldn't even be here--
On that, we *agree.*
You still *smell* like a laundress...soap in the *wrong* places and grime in the *right* ones.
Face it--you're a *street urchin.* You have no business being an apprentice under Master Alexander.
Better a street urchin than a *soulless hag.*

I'll take soulless. But a hag, *no*--I could probably make even those *rags* you're wearing look good.
Fortunately, I don't need to... *my* family gives me a dress allowance.
Enough, Felice. Now that Giselle is a royal apprentice, she'll be getting a dress allowance from the palace. And so will you.
Functionally, you're *equals.*
Ondine, don't be such a *plebian.* You and I come from two of the oldest and most *respected* families in Verne. Whereas Giselle...
...Who exactly are your family, my pet? Fish mongers? Aether thieves? Chimney sweeps?
Oh, I *forgot.* You have *no* family at all.
RRRAH!
Giselle!
By the time I'm done with you, it'll take more than pretty dresses to make up for what used to be your *face!*
Dear, *dear!* The laundress wants to *assault* me!

Lemme at her!
Felice, maybe you should go unpack some of those tremendous *hat boxes* you've brought with you.
Good luck with this one, Ondine.
Snap out of it, Giselle--this isn't some back alley alehouse.
If you want Felice and her harpies off your back, you have to be *smarter* than this.
Genevieve tried to be smarter, and look where it got her. Sometimes the only way to solve things is with a *fist.*
This is *not* one of those times. The palace is as dangerous as the street, but in a very different way.
How do you mean?
People like Felice and Jolie and Heloise use *words* and *looks* the same way you use your *right hook.*
Trust me, I know. It's hard to be a *palace butterfly* when you look more like a *house fly.* I've never fit in.
But I've survived because I've kept my wits about me.

You make it sound like a *war.*
Oh believe me, it is--as you're already discovering.
But I can help you fight it. I know exactly what weapons you'll need.
And what are they?
A polished face, an elegant demeanor, a mean sense of *style...*
And a relentless, wicked *mind.*
You want to tart me up like a fussy, blue-blooded palace wench.
Exactly
Follow me.
Where are we going?
The baths, and then the palace dressmaker.
Don't waste your time, Ondine--it takes more than soap and silk to make a *lady.*

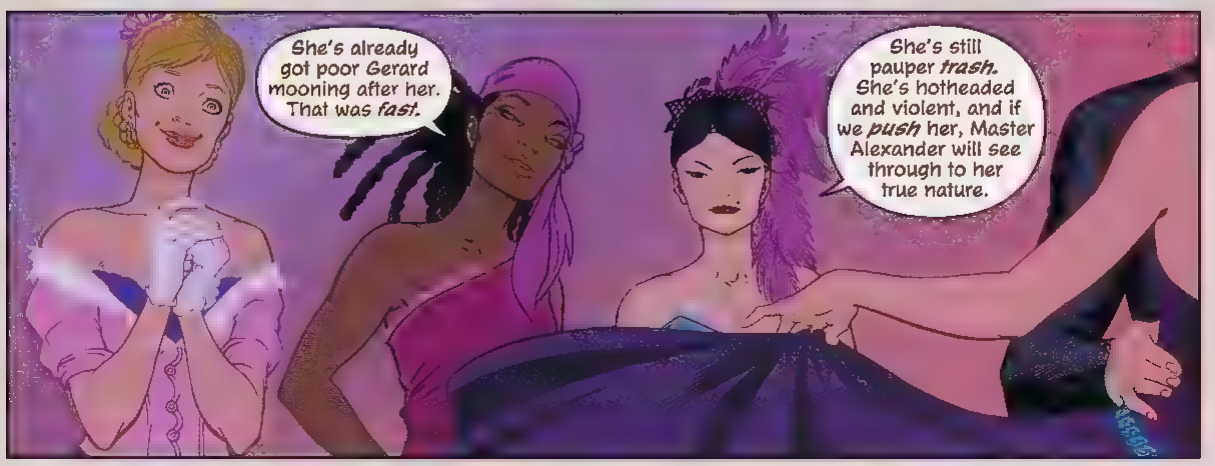
The first thing to remember is that like all predators, palace gossips are more afraid of *you* than you are of *them.*
"Provided, of course, you show *no fear.*"
With your help, we'll throw the elites into *chaos.*
When *we* control the aether, they'll have to answer to *us* if they want fuel. If they don't, they can rot in the *dark.*
"They can *scent* fear. So you must always appear cool and collected."
Chin up, sister Genevieve. You're with *us* now.
...O-okay
Of course, you have a natural *advantage.*
What's that?
You're *smarter* than they are, however much you try to hide it behind all that swagger. You answered the riddle they *couldn't.*

So you're the girl who *thinks* she's taught herself the Noble Arts, eh?
I-I don't think it, I *know* it.
Good girl
"Trust me, they will hold it *against* you."
So what do I do?
Flaunt it. Don't try to hide the fact that you've broken all the rules by beating them at their own game. Be *confident*.
Violet silk, I think, to match those remarkable *violet eyes*.
I agree.
Oh, *brother*.
Holy *cow!*
Trust me, my dear wayward laundry girl--

"--You're going to knock them all dead."
Welcome to the *revolution.*

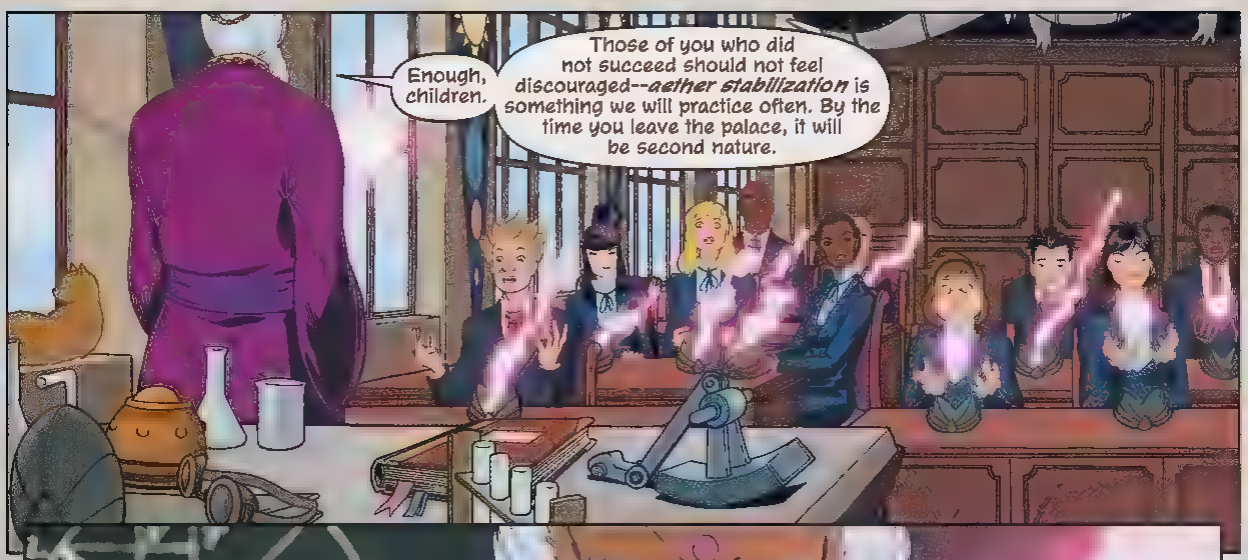
What luck that the girls Master Alexander chose are all so *beauteous*-- except for that *fat* one, what's her name, Ondine.
Those girls are our *fellow apprentices,* Bruno, "fat one" included. You should be more *chivalrous.*
Ah, the gallant *Gerard*-- always on the lookout for the honor of the ladies.
Forgive me for my insolence.
I'm just saying it's not always about *looks!*
.Really. Not about looks, huh?

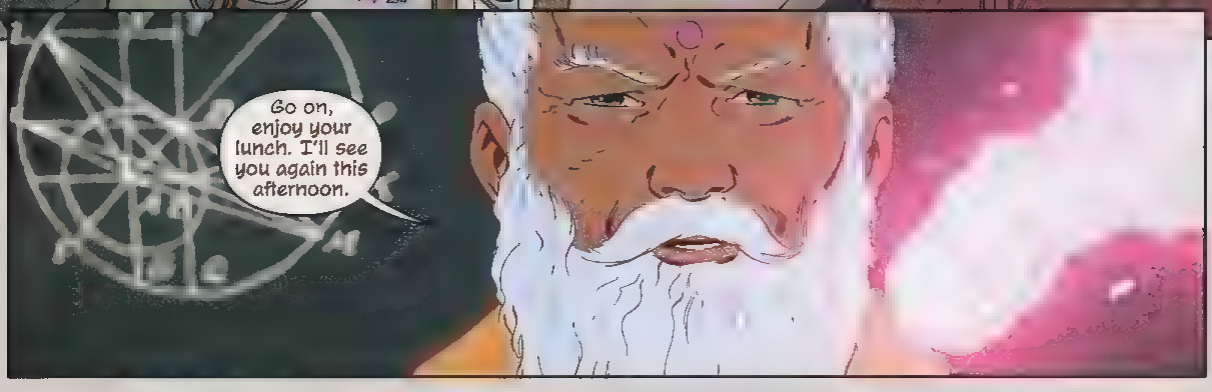
Who is that *vision* in the purple gown?
The little orphan laundry maid, you idiot! Vision my *breeches!*
They're all *staring* at me!
Remember what I told you. Calm and cool.
My lady Giselle, may I have the honor of this dance?
I'm no *lady,* and whether it's an honor or not is up for debate--
But yes, you *may.*
There's something you should know first--
I *can't* really dance. Ondine hasn't gotten to that part yet.
Don't worry, I'm a *terrible* dancer. But all you have to do is whirl around and laugh politely to fool these people.
You look *beautiful.* If you want the truth, the only reason I risked stepping on your *toes* is to get a chance to tell you that.
You could have told me as much over there, and spared both my toes and my *dignity.*

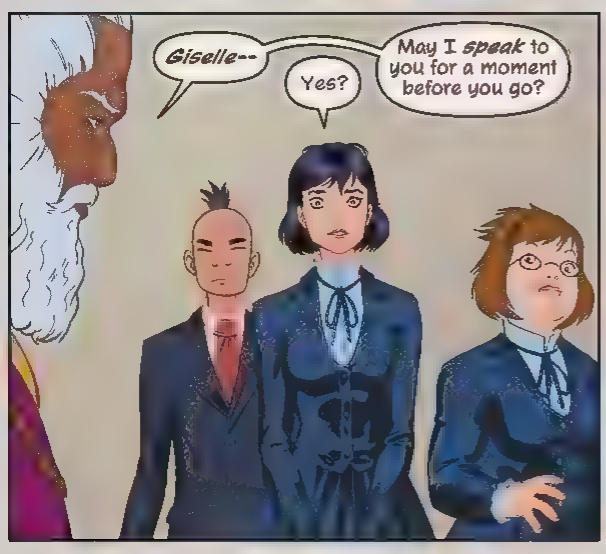

She's already got poor Gerard mooning after her. That was *fast.*
She's still pauper *trash.* She's hotheaded and violent, and if we *push* her, Master Alexander will see through to her true nature.

"All we have to do is find her *weak spot.*"
There is *more* to the Noble Arts than chemicals and equations.
Aether is a *mysterious* substance.
It is *essential* to our daily lives, fueling our homes and transport. But it originates beyond the stars.
While we collect it mechanically during the twice-yearly full eclipses...
...your ability to manipulate it depends on your *intuition* and *willpower.*
Now, take up a sphere of aether and open it carefully. Your only task is to keep it from *dissipating.*

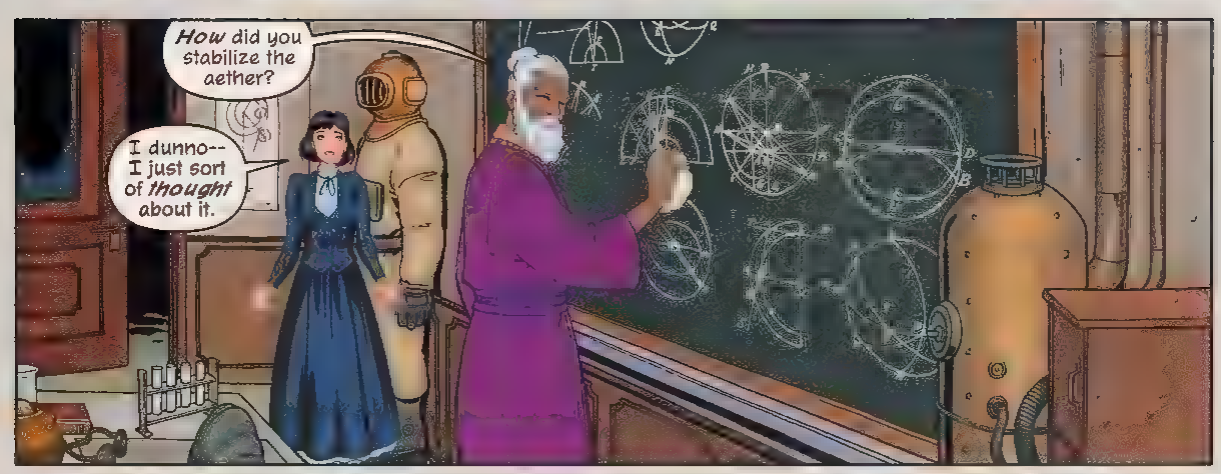
GAH!
POP
Nice going, genius.
Come on... cooperate...
Why, hello there
Beginner's luck.
But you're a beginner too, Felice! Why couldn't you--
Shut up, Heloise.


Enough, children.
Those of you who did not succeed should not feel discouraged--*aether stabilization* is something we will practice often. By the time you leave the palace, it will be second nature.

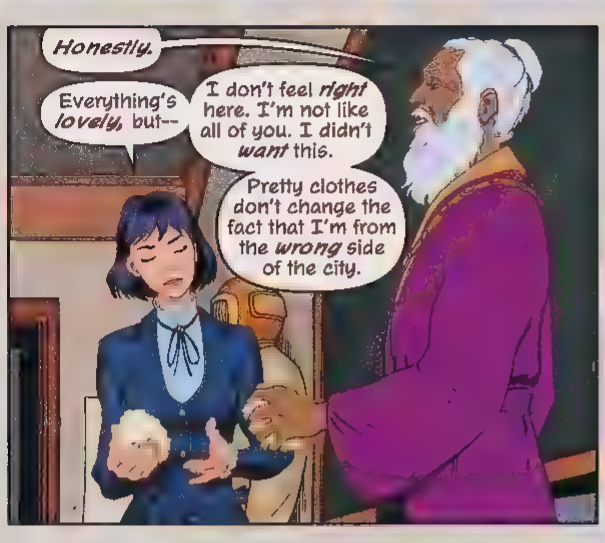

Go on, enjoy your lunch. I'll see you again this afternoon.


Giselle--
Yes?
May I *speak* to you for a moment before you go?

I didn't *cheat*, if that's what this is about. I kept that purple gunk together fair and square.
I *know* that, child.


How did you stabilize the aether?
I dunno-- I just sort of *thought* about it.

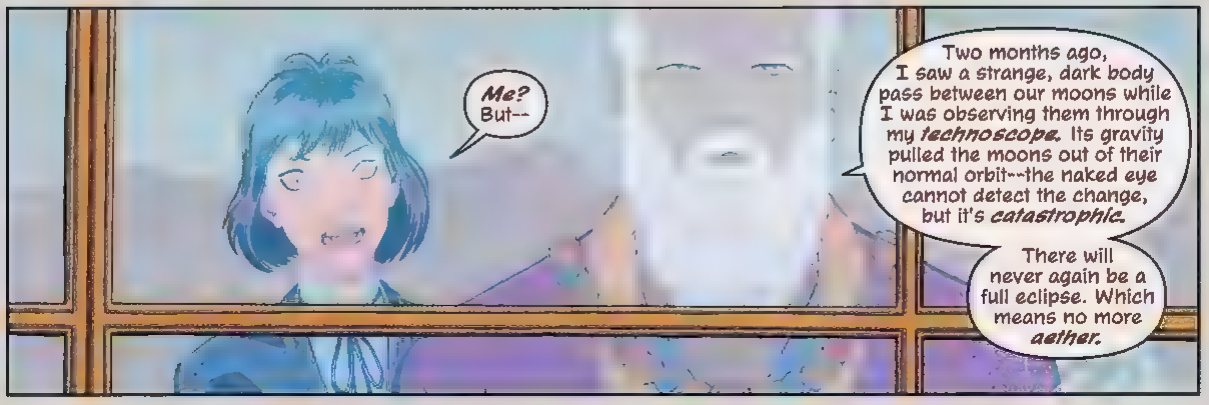
That is exactly what I *hoped* you would say.
How are you settling in at the palace?
Honesty?


Honestly.
Everything's *lovely,* but--
I don't feel *right* here. I'm not like all of you. I didn't *want* this.
Pretty clothes don't change the fact that I'm from the *wrong* side of the city.

Maybe the wrong side of the city is what we've been *missing* all these years.
Out of dozens of educated nobles, it was *you* who answered my final question correctly.

A *trick* question.
Moons just don't *fall out of orbit.* It's *impossible.*
I only *wish* it were a trick.

But you can't mean...it can't be *true,* can it?
It can be and *is,* my child.
Which is why I need your *help.*
You may be just the person we need in this time of crisis.


Me? But--
Two months ago, I saw a strange, dark body pass between our moons while I was observing them through my *technoscope.* Its gravity pulled the moons out of their normal orbit--the naked eye cannot detect the change, but it's *catastrophic.*
There will never again be a full eclipse. Which means no more *aether.*

"And if we do not find a solution ..
"All Verne will be doomed."
To Be Continued...

CROSSGEN

TWO TEENAGED WIZARDS. ONE DESTINY.

Can their friendship survive its greatest test?

The Limper Hall Orphanage for Girls in the impoverished slums of Hyperion is no [illegible] for two young girls to grow up. But Chastity [illegible] always [illegible] each other, waiting for the day they will be [illegible] servitude of [illegible] and secretly daring to study the [illegible] only available [illegible] they're caught after hours in the [illegible] Limper Hall they have no chance, but [illegible] their own [illegible] direct all her efforts to tearing it apart! Acclaimed author G. Willow Wilson and superstar [illegible] of impending civil war!

MARVEL

CROSSGEN
ISSUE NUMBER 3
MYSTIC
Magic *can* happen...but only for one of them.
G. WILLOW WILSON • DAVID LÓPEZ
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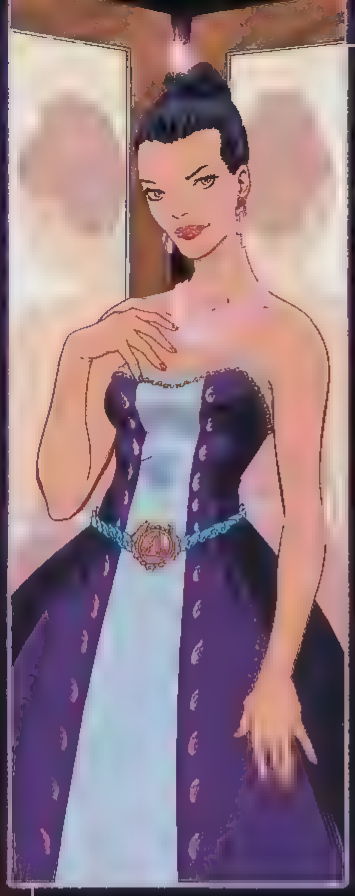

Aether is the magical element that makes all of Hyperion run, from the High Palace to the impoverished slums where Giselle and Genevieve grew up as sisters at The Limpet Hall Orphanage for Girls...until the day their secret study of the Noble Arts, magic supposedly wielded only by the aristocracy, was discovered and they fled.

Dressed as maids, they sought refuge in the palace, where the romantic Viv begged Giselle to attend the Apprentice Choosing Ceremony. But when it came time to answer Master Alexander's final question, headstrong Giselle shouted him down as a fraud for using the Arts as a way of keeping the social classes in place. Alexander saw in Giselle not only a streak of inherent magical ability, but the echo of a prophecy from long ago, and named her as his final Apprentice. Crushed, Viv fled for a second time.

While Giselle tries to acclimate herself to her new life of academia, Genevieve is taken in by [redacted], the roguish leader of the [redacted]. Suddenly, the two girls find themselves on opposite sides of the class divide. In the palace, Giselle is the only apprentice Alexander has confided in, telling her Verne's moons will never align again, meaning their energy source will literally disappear overnight. But how can she step up when a clique of mean girls is determined to drive her back to the streets? Genevieve, however, is settling in comfortably underground, asserting herself and her abilities for the first time in her life...it seems the Resistance might have just found a new leader...

MYSTIC

G. WILLOW WILSON **SCRIPT**	DAVID LÓPEZ **PENCILS**	ÁLVARO LÓPEZ **INKS**	NATHAN FAIRBAIRN **COLORS**	JARED K. FLETCHER **LETTERS**
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For the past few weeks, we have focused on theory behind the Noble Arts. Today it is time to put those theories into practice.
Behold-- the *aether mirror.*
A remarkable feat of engineering, it uses an attuned aether field to reflect both light and shadow, along with heat and cold.
Today, you will learn to build one.

Basic dual polarization-- I taught myself this stuff back in Mistress Alenora's study at Limpet Hall. Less dry than all this theory we've been learning.
Well, some of us have not had the benefit of your autodidactic education, Giselle. Have pity and lend us a hand.
Forgive my lateness, Master Alexander-- an extracurricular project positively hung me out to dry.
See that it does not happen again, Felice.
Of course not, Master.
What's she been up to?
Just ignore her...
...she loves to make an entrance.
I give up. I don't even know where to put this.
I hope that only happens to you with aether mirrors.
You may need one of these.

It's no use.
You've got to be *gentle.*
I have an idea. Let's break for *lunch.*
Excellent. I'll meet you down in the kitchens.
I'm told the cooks are making *brambleberry pie* today.
Well don't eat it all before we get there--I've got to stop by my room and get my other pair of *glasses.*
Gerard has been very *attentive* to you.
Nah--he's just a friendly guy.
And *hopeless* at basic aether engineering
Hopeless at that, and hopelessly *infatuated* with--
Absolutely *ruined!*
You can't get water and soap out of *silk!* These will all have to be thrown away--

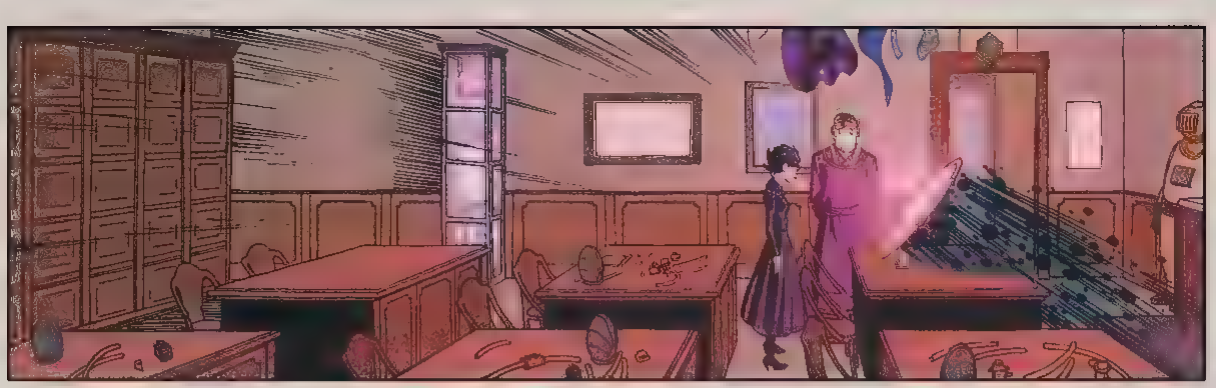
What a waste! Such beautiful gowns they were...
Giselle! Your dresses!
I--I don't understand--
Who could have done such a spiteful thing? After all the Master Dressmaker's hard work...
Perhaps the poor girl did it herself--
She is a common laundress after all.
Poor little lamb. Did you think you could wash a silk gown the same way you do a burlap apron?
It was you! You ruined my dresses! That's why you were late to class!
Me?

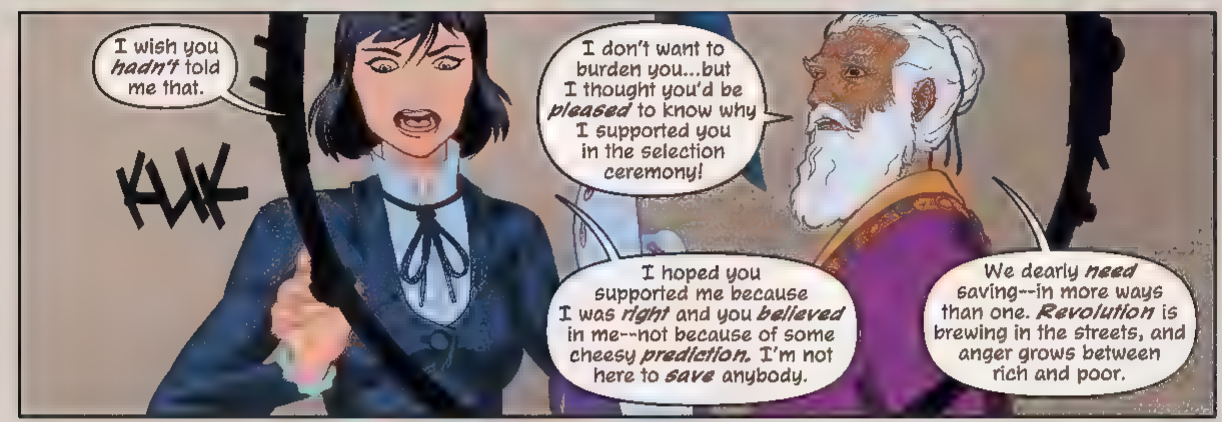
Fellow, this silly vendetta of yours has gone far enough. Giselle is our fellow apprentice.
Apprentice she may be, but a lowborn orphan will never be my fellow.
You-- you--
You what, little lost laundress?
Giselle... your temper...
You are beneath my contempt.
=Phew=

And what exactly do you plan to do with those?
None of your business.
Giselle--
Not now, Ondine.
"Little lost laundress"...
Laundress or not, I'm ten times better at this than those upper class chumps put together.
What am I doing here? Viv's out on the streets by herself, and the world is coming to an end.
At least at Limpet Hall I knew who I was...

And who my *friends* were.
Please work... otherwise that skinny-bottomed, silk-diapered *Felice* will *never* let me live this down.
Stellar.

Well done, Giselle.
Master Alexander!
I've never seen aetheric heat stasis used so creatively.
It's nothing--
I just figured if it works for metallurgy, it'd probably do for cloth...
If you took our classes this seriously, you'd be first on my list of candidates for high apprentice.
How can I concentrate when there are hungry people rioting at our gates, and my best friend is out there alone?
I know it's hard. But completing your training is the best way to help your friend... and the world.
Have I ever told you about the secret prediction of the late High Artisan Raynard?
The guy who discovered celestial harmonics?
Just so.
He predicted that a terrible imbalance would afflict the moons of Verne, one that would threaten the very existence of our civilization...
And that a royal apprentice with eyes the color of aether would ultimately pull us back from the brink.




I wish you hadn't told me that.
KNK
I don't want to burden you...but I thought you'd be pleased to know why I supported you in the selection ceremony!
I hoped you supported me because I was right and you believed in me--not because of some cheesy prediction. I'm not here to save anybody.
We dearly need saving--in more ways than one. Revolution is brewing in the streets, and anger grows between rich and poor.

You have a foot in both worlds. You could help--
Stop saying that! I'm just one person--and with those idiot girls breathing down my neck, I can barely help myself!

I hope that's not true, Giselle--

"--Because greater tests lie ahead, and you must be ready."

Apprentices, meet *homunculus aetherius*--your average mechanical manservant.
His body is made from ordinary steel, tin and brass, but aether *animates* him and gives him rudimentary *intelligence.*
You each have in front of you the parts necessary to create your *own* homunculus.
I hope you studied your schematics last night, because you will *not* have recourse to the textbook.
Good luck!
I think we're *done* for.
The knee-bone is connected to the thigh-bone, the thigh-bone is connected to the foot-bone, ta tum te tum tum...
Show-off.

It's not showing off when you're just naturally amazing.
Or unnaturally overconfident.
Don't worry, Gerard, I'll teach you everything I know...if you'll be quiet and let me work for a whole five minutes.
There!
Now to turn him on...
Wha--?!

Think I'll *skip* that robot-building lesson, if it's all the same to you.
I don't know what happened! I calibrated everything *perfectly!*
AAAAAH!

I hope you have a good explanation for the carnage you've caused, young lady!
I--I don't know--
After everything we talked about--after all my hopes for you--this is what happens. You're just not taking your new role seriously, Giselle.
It's not my fault! I built that thing exactly the way it says in the textbook!
I don't have the energy to keep trying to persuade you.
That's it? You butter me up with all this stuff about being special and important, and now you're just going to walk away?
Fine. I guess I don't have as many friends here as I thought.

Poor Genevieve--*you* would never have let something like this happen.
I was *wrong* to stay here. This was *your* dream, not mine.
I've got to find her--I've got to *apologize*, and go back to my *real* life--

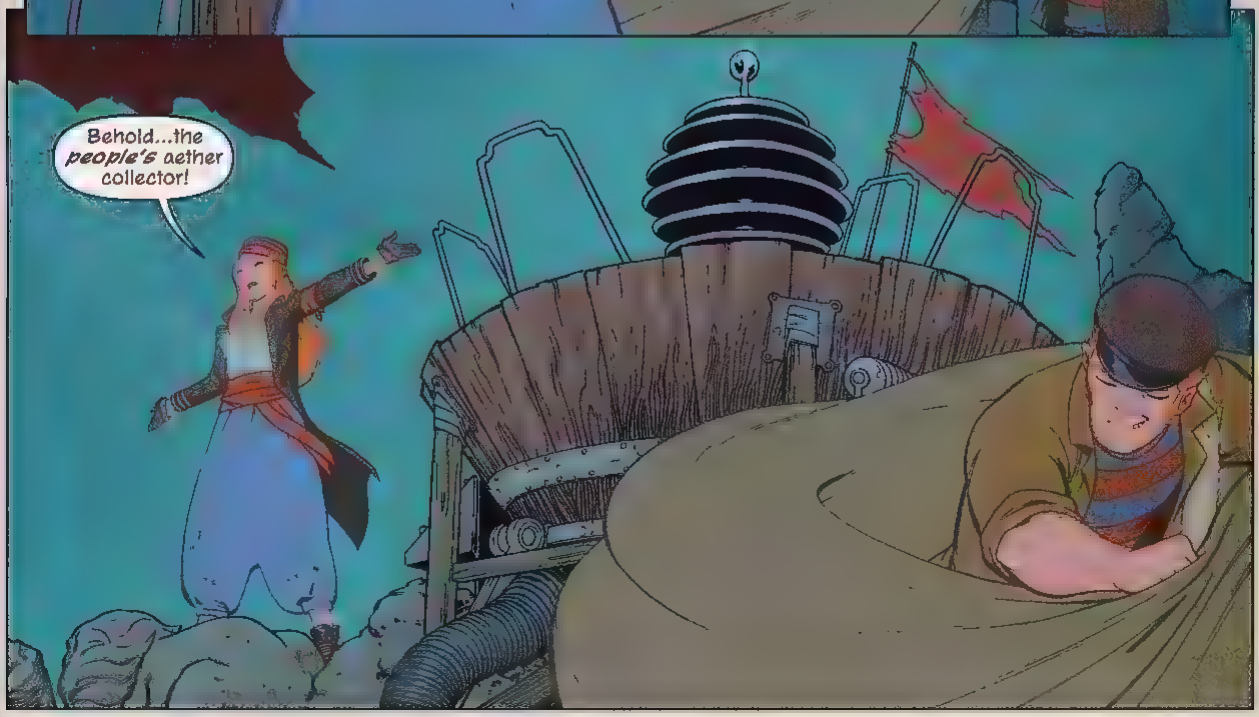
What in heck happened here?
Looks like things have gotten even worse than I thought...
UNGH!
You're a long way from the palace, little princess.
Let go of me, you overgrown turnips!
AARGH!
WHUNK
AAH!

Hurts, do it?
Not as much as it *will* when the *people's assembly* gets done with ye.
=Nngh=
Welcome to the *revolution*, love.
Friends, our moment has *arrived!*

No longer must we rely on *scraps* from the master's table!
We stand poised on the verge of *energy independence*-- the means to supply *ourselves* with the aether we need to fuel our homes and workplaces!

How long have you been *bankrupting* yourself to pay for aether collected by the elites?
Too long!

But *no* longer!
In two nights' time, the next *full eclipse* of our moons will occur. And *this* time, we will be *ready!*


Behold...the *people's* aether collector!

Miss Genevieve! Miss Genevieve!
What is it, Polly?
Jean and Raif've snagged a princess! They're keepin' her hostage in your command tent!
Hostage?
I'd better go see what this is about--
They say her dress is covered in diamonds and her shoes is made from gold--
This one should fetch a fine ransom from the palace, Sister Genevieve.
Here, girl--

--keep a civil tongue in yer head this time!
...Viv?!
No.. it can't be
TO BE CONCLUDED...

CROSSGEN
TWO TEENAGED WIZARDS.
ONE DESTINY.
Can their friendship survive its greatest test?
The Limpet Hall Orphanage for Girls in the impoverished slums of Hyperion is no
orphanage...and secretly daring to study the Noble Arts, magical skills only available to
them, one girl will take up the massive burden of saving the world and the other will
MARVEL

CROSSGEN
ISSUE NUMBER 4
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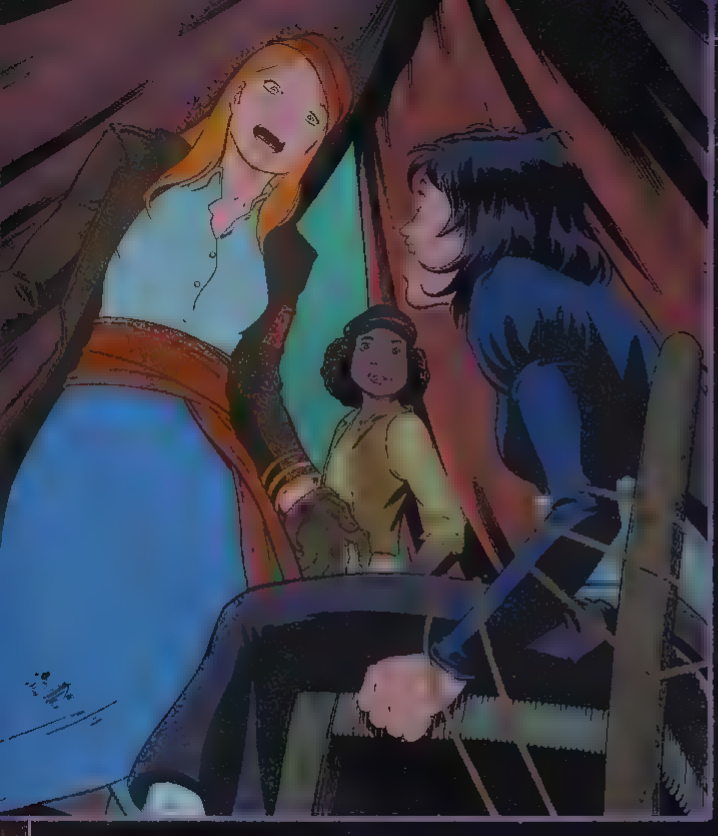

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Genevieve is taken in by Phillipe, the roguish leader of the Resistance. Asserting her abilities for the first time in her life, she builds a People's Aether Collector to strike a blow at the aristocracy. Meanwhile, in the palace, Alexander confides in Giselle that Verne's moons will never align again, meaning their energy source will literally disappear overnight...and that she is the one prophesied to stop it.

Already overwhelmed, when the other Apprentices sabotage her work Giselle gives up, running away in the dead of night in search of Genevieve. On the streets again, she's captured by the Resistance and brought before Phillipe's new right hand...Genevieve herself!

MYSTIC

G. WILLOW WILSON	DAVID LÓPEZ	ÁLVARO LÓPEZ	NATHAN FAIRBAIRN	JARED K. FLETCHER
SCRIPT	PENCILS	INKS	COLORS	LETTERS
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It can't be-- Giselle?!
You were supposed to be a princess!
And you were supposed to be some kind of radical revolutionary.
I guess we're both full of surprises today.
NORA
552
Viv? Do you know this enemy of the people?
I--she's not an enemy of the people.
She's an orphan like me. She's the one who was chosen as a royal apprentice.
In that case, she is not only an enemy, she is also a traitor to her class.
Traitor my skinny rear.
Who is this windbag, Viv?

My name is Phillipe. And you'd better watch that tongue, because outside your safe, pretty glass palace, I'm in charge.
The people are angry. They're prepared to make examples of turncoats like you.
The people, or the people's mouthpiece?
Giselle, don't--
You see how she undermines our most noble cause? She'd bring us all down if she could.
B-but--
She betrayed you, Genevieve.
Don't forget who you are and what you mean to our people. This traitor must pay-- and you must pass her sentence.
I'm sorry.
Viv--you don't have to do this--
I do. You were right, Giselle--you were right about everything. I was living with my head in the clouds, blind to the hard truth of the world. But that's changed.

In the name of the people, I sentence you to *death.*
Fetch the *headsman,* Polly.
NO!
Viv, listen to me-- *you* were right, I was *wrong.* I shouldn't have dragged you down every time you talked about your *dreams*--I see now that they could have come *true* if I hadn't screwed things up for you.
Viv! *VIV!*
Don't listen to this idiot! He doesn't care about the people-- he's in this for *himself!*
Please, Viv! You're the closest thing to *family* I've ever had--
I've been *miserable* without you, and I feel *terrible* about what happened at the ceremony-- it should have been *you!*
Oh, Gise.e.
Ignore that charlatan. You have a *new* family now.

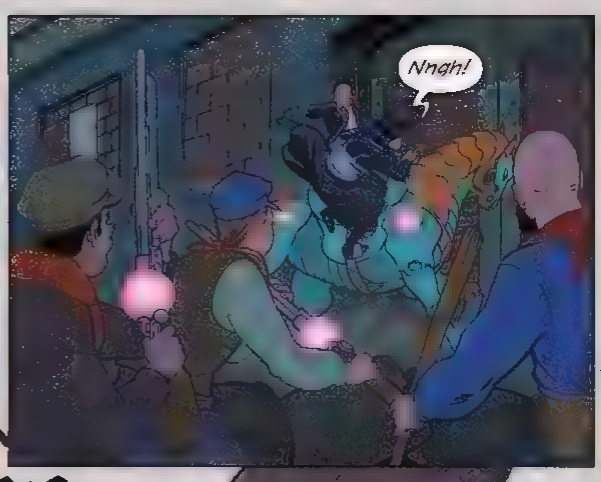
Elmore
THUNK
Any .ast words?
Yes.
You're all in terrible *danger.* That eclipse we're all expecting? It's *not* going to happen.
What do you mean, it's not going to happen?
The *moons* have fallen out of alignment. I heard it from Master Alexander *himself.*
If we don't find a *solution,* there'll be no more *aether,* for poor and rich alike.

She's lying.
She wants to scare us into keeping quiet and doing as we're told-- it's another cheap aristocrat trick.
It's the truth!
I've had my fill of elitist trickery, just like you. But if you stage your revolution now, the lights'll go off and we'll all be doomed.
This woman is a spy sent from the palace to disrupt our plans.
The elites are frightened because we no longer need them--
--we are so many and so strong that we could block out the sun itself!
The sun itself... that's it!

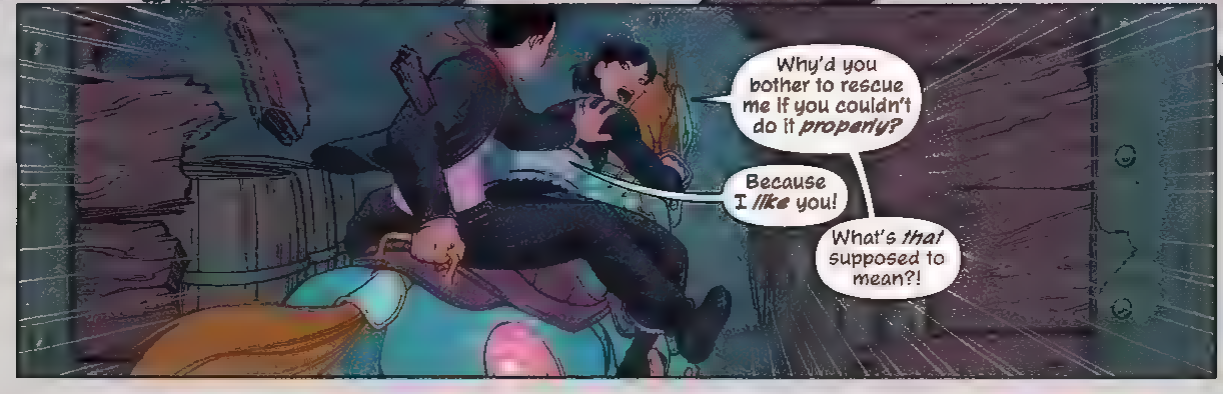
TALLY HO!
Clear the way, quick!
Up you go!
WHAA!
Gerard! Are you *qualified* to be driving this thing?

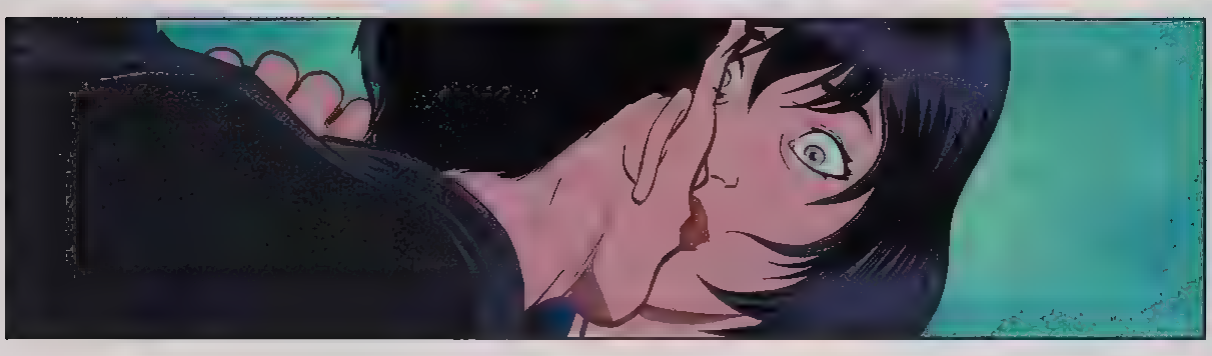
No! I was hoping *you* were!

Go left, go left!
How?!


Nngh!

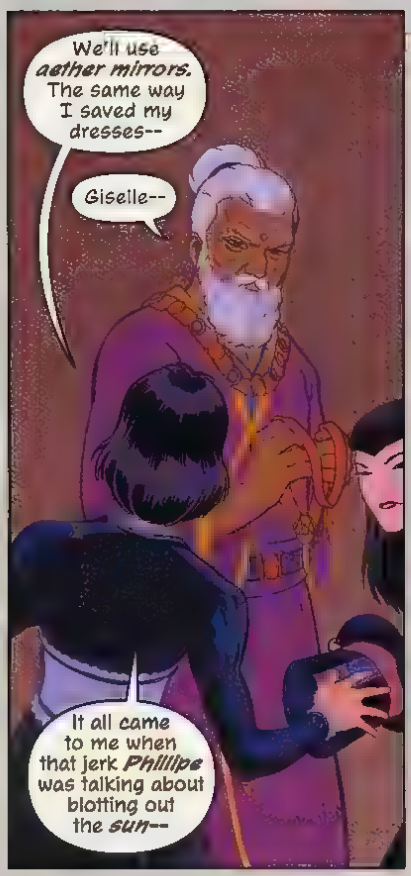
CRASH


Why'd you bother to rescue me if you couldn't do it *properly*?
Because I *like* you!
What's *that* supposed to mean?!



"Over the past few months, I have had an opportunity to watch all of you apprentices quite *closely*.
"Each of you has unique *strengths*--and individual *weaknesses*. But one of you has stood out among the rest, both for her quick wit and her dedication."
STOP
Felice, you have demonstrated an exceptional desire to *succeed*. This should serve you well in your *new position*.
I now pronounce you my *High Appren*--

Master Alexander, Master Alexander!
I've got it! I know how we can *save the eclipse!*


We'll use *aether mirrors.* The same way I saved my dresses--
Giselle--
It all came to me when that jerk *Phillipe* was talking about blotting out the *sun*--

It's *too late* for this. You've abandoned your training, run away from the palace in the dead of night--
You were right, Giselle. This is *not* the place for you.

All of the signs were there--the color of your *eyes,* the *prediction*--
But I was *wrong.* Nothing to be done about that now.

I know I didn't take all this as *seriously* as I should have.
You opened a door for me, and instead of walking through it, I kicked it *shut.* Because I was afraid of becoming *someone else.*

I'm not afraid anymore.
I know I'll always be Giselle, flaws and all. But I see now what I'm capable of--and I want to help. I'm ready. Let me prove it to you.
You're as stubborn as you are clever, Giselle-the-laundress.
Very well. You are hereby readmitted as a royal apprentice.
Thank you! You won't regret this!
Hooray! I knew you'd be back!
Couldn't stay away, could you?
A peasant is like a weed... root it up, and it just comes right back.
But not for long...not for long.

Hey! Save the party for when we've saved the world!
I've run through a million scenarios in my head--rockets, magnets, cannons, you name it--
--and there's no way we can force the moons back into alignment to create an eclipse.
I thought you said you had a solution. What exactly are we supposed to do?
Fake one.
If I've learned anything at the palace, it's that sometimes putting on an act is as powerful as the truth. You taught me that, Felice.
Aether mirrors reflect both light and shadow. If we make them big enough, and arrange them in a precise alignment, they'll form a shadow beam large enough to block out both moons--
Creating maximum darkness.
We'll make our own magic.
..Simple, yet elegant.
I believe there is a chance this may work. A small chance-- but a small chance is better than none at all.

"My friends! Tonight we enter a *new era!*
The palace lackeys will try to *prevent* us from using our aether-collecting device.
But if I've learned one thing from my time among you, it's that the bonds of *brotherhood* are *stronger* than magic!
We will meet them with *force.* Do not spare them, for they will not spare *us.*
"An age of self-sufficiency, dignity, freedom, baptized by the most spectacular natural event known to our planet--a *full eclipse!*"
Long live the people!
Long live the revolution!
Brother citizen! Throw the switch! When maximum darkness is achieved, we want to be *ready!*
Aye aye, sister citizen!

Hurry, my young friends! We don't have much time!
Are you *sure* this is going to work?
No--but there's no way I'm going to sit at home doing *nothing* instead.
Felice--take your team to the old distillery atop Apothecary Hill and set up your mirror there!
Giselle--your team will take Jackbottom Square. It's in the hands of the rebels, so be *careful*.
You know the city, the people, the palace, and the Noble Arts. No one else can claim as much. History turns on what you do tonight.
Good luck, dear children.
Luck's got nothing to do with it--better wish us good *timing*.
For that, Giselle, I'm counting entirely on *you*.

I need to rest!
No rest-- it's only a little bit farther!
Beranka C
I had no idea things had gotten so bad down here.
Easy to miss if your whole world is the palace. Things have been bad down here for awhile.
But you're here now-- that's what matters.
Run! They're coming with knives and sticks an' they'll kill anyone who crosses 'em!
There! We'll set it down in that ruined old building up ahead!
Beranka C

Heave-ho!
It's time.
Let's calibrate the angle of the lens to seventy-two degrees, thirty-six min--
I can't let you do that, princess.
I was wondering when you'd show up.
There's no time for your idealism, Viv. If this doesn't work, we all suffer.
We're already suffering. You of all people should know what it's like to have nothing to lose.
Shall I teach her some humility, sister Genevieve?
Try it and I'll make you several teeth poorer.
We don't have time for this horseload.

Sister Genevieve! Brother Phillipe! The moons!
They're-- they're passing one another while there's still light!
I...I don't understand...
You said we'd be able to collect aether. You said we were going to be free!
I'm sure there's an explanation--
You lied!
TRAITOR!
Ungh!

Giselle! Do what you have to do!
Hnh!
No--
Shall I kill them, sister Genevieve?
It's over

So? Are you going to string us up, behead us, or keep us for ransom?
...No.
I'm going to have you escorted back to the palace in *safety.*
What?! But--
Hush.
Am I supposed to say *thank you?* Or is this your way of asking for an invitation back to the palace?
Thank you would be a good *start.* But I'm finished with the palace--they need me *here.* The future of Verne needs me. It's--it's *nice* to be needed.
Forgive me if I can't find it in my heart to be happy for somebody who tried to have me *executed.*
I did what I *had* to do--just like *you.*
I hoped we could *fix* things. Somebody once told me it doesn't cost anything to *hope.*
Sometimes it *does.*
Well. I guess there's nothing left to say, then.
I guess not.
Unless--
Genevieve the *merciful!*
Genevieve the merciful!
Genevieve the merciful!

This was a fine night's work, my young friends. A *fine* night's work.
And in honor of the *heroine* of the hour--
I think you have *more* than earned this, Giselle.
I hereby name you my *High Apprentice*...
Assuming, of course, you're *interested* in the job?
Once upon a time, I might have said *no*--
I've *lost* so much tonight. But *gained* something I didn't know I needed. It's all happening so fast--but I guess that's why they call it *destiny*.
Thank you, Master Alexander. I *accept*.
A new day dawns. And with it, a new hope for us all.
The End

CROSSGEN

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